

**International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural
Relations (IMIR)**

**KOSOVO IN APRIL 2003 – HEADING FOR
INDEPENDENCE OR SLIPPING BACK TO ITS
MIRROR WORLD**

Antonina Zhelyazkova



2003

Sofia 1303, 55, Antim I St., tel: (+3592) 8323112; fax: 9310-583;
e-mail: minority@imir-bg.org; <http://www.imir-bg.org>

KOSOVO IN APRIL 2003 – HEADING FOR INDEPENDENCE OR SLIPPING BACK TO ITS MIRROR WORLD

Research Methodology

The team consisted of five scholars: a Balkan studies historian, a historian-anthropologist, a linguist-anthropologist, a journalist well versed in Balkan affairs, and an interpreter-mediator¹. They represented the main body of the team already specialised in doing field research in the Western Balkans.

Field work was carried out between 31 March and 7 April in the territory of Macedonia and Kosovo, plus a number of additional interviews, conducted in Bulgaria, with family members of the Bulgarian police force contingent, as well as with members of the UNMIK American police force contingent, which were started in Priština and then continued in Sofia. In May, a team member visited Gračanica, Kosovo, again in order to make some more inquiries.

The aim of the study was to define the limits and chances for multiethnic co-existence in Kosovo; to identify the zones of compatibility and incompatibility between the different ethnic and religious communities. We sought to analyse to what extent was co-existence mimicry and an effort to demonstrate tolerance – by way of self-adjustment to the European standards, and to what degree, an existing reality and a potential chance. Would it be possible in the future to expand the tolerance zones, or overwhelming would remain the tendency of a shrinking agreement in all spheres of public, social, and political life.

Like in all previous studies, of course, the subject of our research interest included: the views of the different ethnic communities, as well as of the different social groups, the international administration, and the peacekeeping forces, concerning the Albanians' prospects and the future of the province of Kosovo.

The field study was carried out in Kačanik, Štrbce, Prizren, Priština, Kosovska Mitrovica, and Gračanica. The research strategy envisaged visiting both ethnically pure areas and places where at least some kind of multiethnic environment was present.

Interviewed were about 70 persons – males and females aged 17-80. The respondents were local residents, Albanians and Serbs, Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Selected were members of all social groups – politicians, intellectuals, university students, hired workers, peasants, unemployed persons, clerics. Conducted were interviews and inquiries with members of the UNMIK police contingents – Bulgarians, Americans, Germans, etc., as well as with KFOR army personnel, of different nationalities, based in the large military camp X. near Prizren.

Administration, policy, economy, society – four years later

Quite visibly, life in the province has been normalised, especially when compared with the chaos and tension of the early 2000. The international administration is getting ready for gradually handing over the government to the local politicians and security forces. This is being done even by way of demonstrative acts: the administrative buildings have been vacated of UNMIK officers and personnel of other international offices in order to accommodate their local counterparts. UNMIK officers have been moved to specially equipped transport containers or to other temporary premises.

¹ A. Zhelyazkova, V. Grigorov, D. Dimitrova, T. Mangalakova, A. Chaushi.

Currently, there are several officially operating police forces in Kosovo: the one under the UN mission (UNMIK), the military one under KFOR, the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), and the Kosovo Defence Corps (TKF).

Underway since January 2003 has been a two-year transition period during which the international administration is required to hand over, step by step, its powers to the local administration and police. The transfer of the administrative and law-enforcement functions has begun from the few ethnically mixed areas, the international forces being expected to have only supervisory and control functions, and, consequently, advise the local government and correct its wrong steps.

The first completely entrusted police station is that in the Štrpce municipality, a place inhabited by compact Serb population. Forthcoming in the next few months is the handover of the police stations in Gračanica, Kosovska Kamenica and Kosovo Polje. In the course of this two-year period and alongside with the handover of the stations, the number of the international UNMIK officers, as well as the KFOR military contingents, should be reduced. Determined have been the percentage quotas by which the international presence in Kosovo is to be steadily diminished. In 2000, some 50 thousand KFOR troops were deployed in Kosovo, while in early 2003 their number was brought down to 30-25 thousand; the plans for cutting down the contingents envisage their number to fall down to 15 thousand by the beginning of 2004 and, later, to as low as 7 thousand.

As reported by our respondents – a colonel, a major and several lieutenants from the KFOR mission at the X. base, as well as by a colonel, a lieutenant-colonel, and a major from UNMIK Police Station 1 – the recruitment of local personnel into the army and police forces is going at an extremely high rate. The Kosovo Defence Corps formed in 2000 is already a contingent of 5 400, of which 1000 are women. They have got their own budget, planning, technical equipment, vehicles with licence numbers, etc. They have even a sort of military academy. These troops were largely employed in 2002, at the time of the earthquake that hit Gnjane. They were the first to arrive on the sites of disaster. They would most likely be the ones to form the core of the future army.

The police forces have been recruited from among the local population – people with high-school education, aged between 21 and 55, psychologically and physically fit, both males and females. The requirement for these forces is to include representatives of all ethnic groups, persons having clean records and possessing valid ID cards issued by the UN administration. Plans envisage that by the beginning of 2005, when the two-year transition period will be over, the number of police officers will reach 7 thousand, and that of the army personnel – 5 thousand, thirty per cent of them expected to be of non-Albanian origin.

At the time of our survey in Kosovo, the international police force had two subdivisions with specific functions: 3 300 police officers (among whom our respondents) served at the police stations in the municipalities and at the Central Headquarters; another 11 thousand, representatives of ten nations, were deployed at 10 bases and enjoyed the status of special police forces – they live at the bases, they are equipped with infantry weapons and armoured vehicles, and are mobilised in special cases alone. They serve as guards of witnesses and magistrates involved in court trials, they guard buildings, they are responsible for keeping law and order during demonstrations and civic disturbances, they escort prisoners.

The local police officers have taken upon themselves, almost fully, the responsibility of road traffic control, public order maintenance, duties on the home

front and in the administration. They have not yet been entrusted with criminal investigation functions. However, by 2005/6 only observers are to remain in Kosovo.

While our field study was in progress, a public protest rally was staged by the Serbs against a proposal advanced by M. Steiner (the civilian governor of the protectorate) demanding the transfer of the competences of the international community to the newly created institutions in Kosovo. Some respondents in Northern Mitrovica and Gračanica explained the motives underlying their protest: "First of all, we are against the fact that the existent institutions are made up of persons who are suspects liable to The Hague Tribunal. We don't believe that similar institutions are prepared to take over the government. Parliament itself has discredited Steiner's idea, because everybody can see it is a discriminatory institution, which disregards human rights and aims to check any initiative coming from the Serb community or from the other minorities, they are simply dummies. Parliament has already proved it disrespects international law. Steiner can't fulfill public interests without an agreement between Belgrade, Priština and the international community, without Kosovo's status being determined. In fact, Mr. Steiner is trying, in a perfidious manner, to pave the way for the actual implementation and completion of the Albanian project for an independent state."

The civilian administrators of the province have been judged quite critically from the very moment of the establishment of the protectorate. Kosovo's first governor, B. Kouchner, was ironically dubbed Kouchneri by the Albanians themselves because of his weak-willed policy in making efforts to establish order in the province and check the aggression of the Albanians. The current governor, Steiner, has also compromised himself by his biased policy in favour of the Albanians and by his planned marriage to a local woman and wedding party arrangements. Steiner's love affair with an Albanian beauty, accompanied by all sorts of gossip of personal and political nature, has been the most widely discussed subject among the international missions in Kosovo.

The Albanians' part in political life. On the political scene after the local and general elections held in Kosovo, there are three basic Albanian parties whose influence is disputed by no one: DLK (the Democratic League for Kosovo) headed by Ibrahim Rugova, DPK (the Democratic Party of Kosovo) of Hashim Thaqi, and ADK (the Alliance for Democratic Kosovo) led by Ramush Haradinaj.

Highest, of course, is the popularity enjoyed by leader Rugova and his party; therefore, the answers given by respondents from different social strata were more or less alike. We asked questions about each leader's popularity in Kačanik, in the village of Mušanik, in Prizren, and in Priština. The responses we got were more or less the same, but prejudices were maybe best formulated by three students from the University in Priština, Albanian Catholics, who declared beforehand they were not politically committed and showed little interest in the political life of the province. When we asked them: "Why, after all, do you approve of Ibrahim Rugova most?", they answered: "Both in the past and at this time, Rugova has always acted for the sake of us all rather than to his own or to his party's political benefit. He is the only one who thinks in perspective, with a view to the future. All other politicians are focused on the present day and care about their own, personal interests alone." To all interviewees Rugova still personifies not only the right type of approach applied for achieving Kosovo's autonomy in the 1990s, but also the strategist who plans for the future of the province for decades to come.

In consequence of our conversations on this subject in a number of different localities and with members of different social groups in the population, we have

come to the conclusion that there is strong disappointment with the politicians and political life in Kosovo and a process of sobering down and disillusionment with respect to the effectiveness of the new free and democratic political system. We have figured out the approximate proportions of the political leaders' rates of approval as follows: some 15-18 per cent support Rugova, between 12 and 14 per cent favour Hashim Thaqi and over two per cent, representing the most radically-minded Albanians, back Ramush Haradinaj.

Over the past year, the tensions among the three leaders have become obvious. The more radical Thaqi and Haradinaj have teamed up as political opponents of Rugova. For the first time, on 5 March 2003 official celebrations were held on the stadium in Priština in commemoration of "the fourth anniversary of the liberation of Kosovo". There was a military parade of units of the Kosovo Defence Corpse, as well as of Kosovo's newly formed police forces. Our respondents, as well as some outside observers, pointed out the fact that it was only Hashim Thaqi and Ramush Haradinaj, in the company of the guests, members of the military wings of the Albanians from Southern Serbia, Western Macedonia and Greece, who reviewed the troops from the platform. Kosovo's president Ibrahim Rugova did not attend the official celebrations.

Some respondents commented speculations that immediately after the review of the troops the guests from the different regions, together with the two Kosovar party leaders, held a secret meeting of the military wing during which particular resolutions were adopted. According to their presumptions, most urgent were the decisions aiming to renew the tensions in Southern Serbia and thus prevent the negotiations on the status of the province initiated among Priština, Belgrade, and the international mediators.

TMK commander in chief, Gen. Agim Cheku, was said to have made efforts to mediate between the two camps and reconcile Thaqi and Haradinaj with Rugova, but to no avail. The friction between the political leaders obviously worried him, because it had been materialised in covert violence in the province ascribed to the new illegal Albanian National Army /ANA/, which operated not only within Kosovo, but also in Western Macedonia. The existing tension had made I. Rugova begin forming, for security reasons, his own party militia, which was expected to run up to 1000 combatants. A similar militia force had been raised under Thaqi, who already had as much as 1 000 fighters, some of whom had been recruited from Albania. With the help of his militia troops, Thaqi sought to increase his influence in the municipalities of Vučitrn, Čičevica, Drenica and Kačanik. The leader of the Alliance for Democratic Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, too, had under his command about 900 soldiers that were concentrated at, and controlling, the villages in the Unič mountains and operated in the areas of Dakovica, Peč and Dečani. Supposedly, their task was to intimidate Rugova's supporters.

We kept asking the same question: "Who stands behind ANA?" Our respondents varied in their answers, but the overwhelming opinion was that "the ANA troops are under the control of Ramush Haradinaj and his brother Gen. Remi, who is currently under arrest as suspect in one of the "generals' cases". It's thought to be in fact a matter of rivalry between the Albanian leaders about who will take control over the traffic".

To us, as researchers, the borderline between ANA fighters and party militia troops was blurred, but one thing is beyond doubt in our analysis – it will become inevitable after the reduction in the number of peacekeeping forces in Kosovo, that the importance of party militias will grow and they will have a substantial influence on the country's political and economic life.

The *Koha Ditore* newspaper conducted their own investigation and made public the following testimonies:

N. from the village of Luka (near Dečani): “My grandson was taken ill and I went to seek help, although I knew one shouldn’t go out after eight in the evening. I was in the car with my daughter-in-law and my grandson, a neighbour was driving. We were stopped by five guys in soldier’s uniforms wearing black masks. They asked where we were going and then let us drive on. Some time later three other men wearing masks stopped us again, I knew one by his voice, but dared not ask anything. I was scared, because they were armed with Kalashnikovs.”

I. from the same village: “Nobody’s complained of physical abuse, but in the villages of Luka, Požar, Ljumbard, Irsnik, Gramačel, Carabrek they would burst into the houses by night. In order to bully people, they sometimes shoot up in the air.”

N.R. from the village of Gramačel: “Two guys tried to set my house on fire, but I threatened them I’d pay them back in the same coin. They maybe thought I might have recognised them and drew back, but anyway, out of anger they fired 60-70 shots in the air. I’m a member of Rugova’s party. I even reported the incident to the police, although their aim was not to liquidate, but rather to threaten me.

S. D. from the village of Carabrek: “There were three men wearing masks and uniforms drumming on the doors around the village, but only I bothered to lodge a complaint. The others were afraid. These guys move around in a jeep, they are organised. When we were with the Serbs, we knew whom we had to be wary of, but now we don’t know where the worst is to come from. Both civilian and police authorities in Dečani say they have no information. They have it, but they don’t care, they’d rather not interfere.”

B.S., the local leader of ADK (R. Haradinaj) in Dečani, tried to clear ANA of suspicion: “It couldn’t be that masked people be soldiers from this army, those are criminal groups. According to ANA members themselves, these are uncontrollable elements who are discontented with the government...”

A.H., a member of Hashim Thaqi’s party, went even further in his assumptions: “There have always been collaborationists of Serbia in this area. They were active here during the war as they are now too...”

The police forces in this region have got intelligence that such squads exist. B.B., who is the international observer for the Dečani police station, said they had got only second-hand information – unofficial. It was only C. who had lodged a written complaint, and they could undertake nothing. The police deputy chief feared those people were organised and had lately been expanding their operations throughout Kosovo.

It is true that the margin between the Albanian politicians and the bands involved in political violence and trafficking is very thin. That is most clearly seen in the widely discussed “generals’ lawsuits” against former commanders of the now disbanded UČK who are still looked upon as heroes of the war of liberation.

Over 50 000 ethnic Albanians in many towns in Kosovo protested against the sentences passed on five members of the group of Davut Haradinaj, Ramush Haradinaj’s brother, who were sentenced to a total of 31 years imprisonment for abuses, abductions and murders of Albanians. During the war the two brothers were in command of UČK’s Operative Zone 6 and were among the first associates of Hashim Thaqi.

After the war, Ramush Haradinaj himself became Gen. Cheku’s second-in-command in the Kosovo Defence Corps. During the first local elections in 2000, there was an assault against him. He suffered 7 or 8 injuries in it and was thereafter

transported on a helicopter to Germany. After his recovery, he returned home and formed the ADK, which is the third political force in Kosovo's parliament.

Proceeding at the time of our sojourn in the province was the case against Rustem Mustafa - Gen. Remi, accused of torturing civilian Albanians as well as of murdering an Albanian family of which only two children had survived. Because in November last year the key witness in this case was killed in a blast in the Dardania café, the prosecutors relied only on the testimony of the children-survivors.

In February the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague announced they would require the extradition of 10 former UČK commanders some of whom are already party leaders, heading their own parties. Again in February, arrested and brought to the Hague Tribunal were the spokesman of Hashim Thaqi's party, a war hero, and a general - member of Thaqi's military staff - Fatmir Limaj (our team had an extensive conversation with him in 2000), as well as the commanders Haidredin Bala, Isak Misliu and Agim Murtezi.

It is possible, at some point in the future, today's active politicians - Thaqi, Haradinaj and Cheku, be called to account and prosecuted too.

The Serbs and their political views. Kosovo's Parliament consists of 120 members and according to the electoral system put into effect the Serbs are entitled to 10 seats; another 10 seats are distributed among the rest of the non-Albanian minorities in Kosovo - Turks, Gorans, Bosniaks, etc. The remaining hundred seats are distributed in proportion to the election results.

Our UNMIK respondents refuted the complaints we had heard from the Serb interviewees in Štrpce: "Although the residents of our municipality are mostly Serbs, an Albanian mayor was imposed on us". Yet, a police colonel denied their statement: "They have themselves to blame. They boycotted the previous elections and didn't turn up. Of course, an Albanian mayor was elected and he, in turn, brought along 20 people, Albanians, to be appointed in the municipal administration. Ten or eleven Serb parties took part in the latest elections and each of them won some seats, while the Albanians got only four votes. It's silly, indeed, that the Serbs disperse their vote."

Another respondent added: "About 200 000 displaced Serbs from Kosovo were enabled to participate in the parliamentary elections, but they didn't go to the polls at all. They boycotted, and they could've taken the second place in parliament, next to Rugova. They could've obtained more votes than Hashim Thaqi's party and thus have stronger influence in political life."

So, finally, it became necessary to find out the number of Serbs left in the province. We heard from Serb respondents some obviously exaggerated figures - as many as 160 000 throughout Kosovo, a respondent from Kosovska Mitrovica telling us that in the municipalities in Northern Kosovo alone they numbered nearly 70 000. These assertions all but made an interviewee from the administration laugh; he assured us those figures were biased: "All Serbs in Kosovo are actually less than 65 000. In Northern Mitrovica, including Zvečan, the Serbs are between 12 000 and 20 000."²

At the office of the Coordinating Centre for Kosovo and Metohia of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, based in Gračanica, we talked about Kosovo's parliament with a respondent, Member of Parliament from the Serb group: "We, Serbs, are only dummies, we are present there in order for people to

² According to UNMIK data the population in Kosovo is between 1,800,000 and 2,400,000 people, i.e. 300 people per sq.m., which is the highest density of population in Europe. More than 500,000 Albanians are living in Pristina now and 170 Serbs only, while in 1999 the population in this city numbered 250,000 people, 40,000 of whom were Serbs.

say that it's a multiethnic parliament. In reality, it functions for the sake of one nation alone – the Albanian. I was among the politicians who were strong supporters of the idea that the Serbs had to take active part in the elections. I was convinced we had to join parliament in order to be able to work for the reconciliation process, for human rights, for bringing everybody's life back to normalcy, throughout Kosovo and Metohia. In a way, our parliamentary involvement is absolutely pointless – it doesn't help to bring the communities closer, neither does it lead to the realization of the human rights project. The Parliament disrespects resolution 1244. The institution's leaders are mostly Albanians who use the multiethnic parliamentary membership to propagandise the one-nation project of an independent state of Kosovo”.

We asked a question about dialogue: “Isn't it possible to talk to any of the Albanian leaders or MP's?” Isn't anyone of them at least more dialogical? Rugova, let's say? Answer: “I'm sorry that, for some reasons, Rugova has probably gone out of the war frustrated, but his party is the most uncompromising one in pursuing the realization of the independence project. I don't think we have to talk personally with those liable for crimes – no matter from which side they are, but we are ready to have talks with Thaqi's and Haradinaj's parties, which emerged from the former UČK, though talks with them are extremely difficult. The truth is that the Albanians want no contacts whatsoever with Serbia, while the Serbs are not willing to return without having any institutional relations with Serbia in place, which doesn't mean they have given up their homes in Kosovo and Metohia”.

A question from a team member: “Under what conditions would the Serbs be willing to return?”. A female respondent – Member of Parliament – replied: “As a matter of fact, UNMIK are not ready to have the Serbs back home. They know perfectly well that their return would mean the restoration of some Serb institutions, killings of Serbs by Albanian extremists, renewal of problems with Serbia. There is no single Serb living in Kosovo who wants us to be separated from Serbia. Much like in the case of the disputes between Palestine and Israel, not only that the international community is unwilling to have the Serbs back here, it is even not willing to keep home those who haven't left.”

The problem is that institutional discrimination inevitably leads to radicalization. In the 1960s, before Milosevic stepped in, there was Albanian domination in the administration in Kosovo and, consequently – discomfort for and discrimination towards the Serbs. In those years nearly 150 000 Serbs left Kosovo. Later on, Milosevic established institutions that discriminated the Albanians and deprived the ethnic Albanian community of the possibility to defend their rights at an institutional level. This naturally led to the strong radicalization of the Albanian community.

Currently, a *mirror* political and social conjuncture is being shaped. The Serbs fear to live without any institutional protection, and the tendency with them is to move towards an ever more conscious and extreme radicalization. Criticisms to the international administration consist in that they have failed to alter the causes and factors underlying Kosovo's ever recurring *mirror worlds*: when the Serbs dominate, they impose their conception of power, when the situation is reversed and the Albanians become dominant – they, in turn, impose their own power conception in which there is no place for the “others”. Based on the same mirror principle one community tried in the past, and the other one is trying now to survive and to feel safe by forming paramilitary troops, as well as parallel institutions. Kosovo has been an international protectorate for four years now, yet, the European administrators allow one ethnic community to dominate over the other and dictate the rules of living in all

spheres, being unable to implement if not a multiethnic pattern of co-existence, at least equal participation of the minorities in the government and the economy – *de facto* rather than *de jure*.

A female respondent described the problem in a very conspicuous way: “You can’t imagine at all how difficult and painful it is to come to know as soon as you were born where you belong. One cannot choose where he or she wants to be - left, right, or social democrat, or maybe in the center – you know this kind of thing. You are familiar with political division, but also with the right to have choice, however, there’s no political power in this place, there’s ethnic power and one has no right to choose. Here, in Kosovo, you come into the world a Serb and you join the Serbs, if you were born Albanian – then your place is with the Albanians, no nuances in between, and I’m sorry to say that all these multiethnic projects advanced by the international community have been a grey zone that has ever been doomed, lacking any chance, or future.”

We came to speculate on the question of what were then the most realistic options for the future of Kosovo and which of the scenarios would be the most acceptable one for the Serbs. We suggested some alternatives and waited for the respondents’ answers: “Independent Kosovo with dual self-government – for either community, cantoning, or division of Kosovo through redrawing the country’s borders, or maybe any other alternative?”

The respondents, Serb politicians, summed up the projects for the future status in the following way: “The reality is that in Kosovo there are two major entities, which want to have their own governmental bodies. If some kind of federalisation is implemented, it will be based on the self-government of these entities. At a centralised level, we should have common bodies, the Serb entity would like to maintain close relations with Belgrade, and the Albanians – with Tirana. This won’t be an independent state, but it will be some long-term perspective for stabilization. The other alternative – division of Kosovo, would mean triggering a chain reaction – if a precedent is set, a divided Macedonia will follow, and one can’t say then what kind of developments would follow in Montenegro and Greece. Why not expect that to reflect on Romania, possibly on Bulgaria too, and so the processes of disintegration would be transferred to Europe.”

The economy or its equivalents in Kosovo. The economic reconstruction in the province is in stagnation. The large ore-dressing works of Trepča, where over 2000 workers were formerly employed, have been closed. None of the big industrial enterprises has reopened. There is no official data about the rate of unemployment, but there is no need, because it is obvious. In Kosovska Mitrovica, for example, out of a total population of 130 000 in its urban and rural communities, as many as 53 300 people are unemployed, 42 per cent of which are jobless women.

Labour opportunities are provided mainly by the service, trade, construction, and transportation sectors, and by the small factories making clothes. The average salary is about 120-150 euros, much higher is the pay received by local people employed as maintenance staff or interpreters at the military bases or with the international administration.

With support from some European funds, consultants and NGOs, some of the local businessmen and activists have been trying to set up and develop small and medium-sized enterprises for the production of building materials, sanitary ceramics, and textile.

On the face of it, there is a widespread economic upsurge, but this illusory picture is due to the ongoing large-scale construction, as well as to the lively trade -

mainly in imported goods, because of the lacking local production. All money made, legally or illegally, is being invested in the construction of large houses; built are also a great number of new hotels and places of public resort.

In the southern (Albanian) part of Mitrovica, we visited one of our respondents, who ran a small sewing shop providing employment to three women. The dresses and embroideries they make have a good number of women customers, and, what is striking for the situation in this particular town, divided by the bridge spanning the Ibar river, not only Albanian, but also Bosniak, Turkish and Goran women come into this small shop. This respondent's business is on the brink of survival, because she has begun from scratch, by herself, together with a friend of hers, and pays a rent for the premises where the sewing machines and materials are placed. She dreams of expanding the production shop, of hiring at least 8-10 women, because she firmly believes that the Albanian women need to become emancipated and earn their own money, as well as be less bound to their homes and husbands.

She told us it was impossible for her to get a bank credit, because she had nothing that could serve as a bank guarantee. We asked her: "We've seen many rich Albanians with obviously thriving businesses, couldn't you borrow money from someone of them, under certain conditions?" The woman laughed, free-heartedly and loudly: "Everybody here works for his own family. No one supports anyone else. And, what is more, I'm a woman – no businessman would talk business with me, the less so money and money lending."

For precisely this reason perhaps a female respondent at the town's municipality, a municipal councilor, told us how, using funds from some European projects, they had focused their efforts on women's qualification – namely, dressmaker's, hairdresser's and beautician training courses. The municipal administration had worked out a project to start 9 small production firms: for woodwork, paste products, textile, and sanitary materials. The idea was for a greater number of women to become motivated not only to get employment at the future factories, but also to become owners, to open their own firms. The respondent we interviewed was president of the newly founded "Association of Businesswomen", which sought to unite the efforts of women of enterprise from both sides of the divided city.

Having conducted quite many interviews, we were left with the impression that a common administration, tax collection, registration of businesses – all are a fiction in this divided city, where the bridge has been turned into a high-security site, barred with barbed wire and sacks of sand, and guarded by heavily armed soldiers from the French contingent of KFOR. Communication between the northern and the southern part of the city is so impossible that a municipal officer makes special visits to the northern part, where the Serb businessmen are, in order to collect the necessary information and enter them in the register on the site. There are some Serbs who would themselves cross the Ibar with the purpose of registering their businesses – they are about 300 in number already, but most of them prefer to go escorted by UNMIK soldiers.

The economic unsteadiness was strongly felt by the shortage of electric power supply. There are regular outages throughout the province and this fact has turned power generators into fashionable goods, they are booming outside each shop or café in the streets of the city. We asked some respondents about the state of electric power supply with certain astonishment, because it was known that electricity was imported from Bulgaria and from Serbia even at preferential, lower prices. In some

interviewees' opinion, power shortage was caused by the resale in Italy of some of the cheaply purchased electricity at much higher prices.

Naturally, part of the economy in Kosovo is linked with smuggling and illegal trafficking in people, narcotics, weapons and other goods. Two days before our arrival in Kosovo, KFOR soldiers had caught a considerable amount of weapons trafficked illegally from Albania through the "green" border? There is an incredible information deficit – this sort of data are never publicised and no member of the civil society is clear about who transfers the weapons from exactly where and whom it is intended for. The truth is that the population is not interested in this matter, because they regard smuggling goods as part of routine daily life.

According to police officers, after the issuance of the special UN instruction of January 2001, which regulated the activity of the police and the control functions of the International Migrations Organisation, the situation of illegal traffic in women and prostitution has been constrained within certain limits. Most importantly, this instruction has repealed the hitherto effective legislation treating victims of traffic as criminals on an equal base with traffickers and procurers; it states instead that all trafficked individuals are considered victims. This has given the police a free hand to take action and, certainly, act in the name of saving hundreds of women, abducted or enticed into slavery.

In 2002 several large-scale police campaigns were carried out in Kosovo to check places of resort used as houses of prostitution, which did not stop procurers from their activity, but compelled them to legalise each girl's job. At the moment, the girls work legally, with official documents and contracts, as waitresses, bar tenders, or dancers, and it is not so easy to hold them in captivity.

We interviewed a police colonel, a specialist in this sphere: "A scheme has been created including three routes of trafficking in girls into Kosovo – through Serbia, through Macedonia, and through Albania. Trafficking takes place in three stages: the girls are recruited by means of job advertisements; afterwards they are transported to the three mentioned countries – the intermediate destinations, where they are maltreated and abused until they are bent, and, later, they are sold to other intermediary rings, the girls' value varying between 3 and 5 thousand euros; the third stage is the transportation of the women across the Kosovo border, most often across the "green" border, and their resale to local agents which distribute and once again sell them to the places of entertainment. A striking fact is, according to investigators, prosecutors and police officers, that dramatically rising is the number of Albanian prostitutes – such were unknown until 10 years ago. Largest is the number of prostitutes from the Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Bulgaria. The prostitutes coming from Bulgaria constitute 10 per cent, 80 per cent of them being Roma women."

The Bosnian experience has shown that in provinces and states that have in the course of years been the arena of international peacekeeping operations or the field of operation of European civilian administrations and observers, trafficking in women and prostitution become a more profitable business than trafficking in drugs. With the emergence of the first places of resort functioning as houses of prostitution, special bans were introduced for the UNMIK police officers, as well as for the KFOR soldiers. All of them have been given a list of "forbidden" places they are not allowed to visit, places where escort girls are offered. This list is updated each month. Catching any officer of the international missions at some of the places on the ban list is sanctioned seriously and most likely leads to the recalling of the rule-breaker from Kosovo. In the opinion of the respondents from the international missions, these

measures have limited the possibility for the members of the international armed forces and the civilian services to get involved in relations of corruption and partnership with the local gangster structures.

The Kosovar aesthetics. Albanians have traditionally been very good builders, that's why the ongoing large-scale construction looks awesome. Perplexing is only the size and overall square surface of the houses built, although the locally typical large patriarchal families do need such almost monumental structures. Apart from this, the Kosovars have been obsessed by the "gangster-baroque" aesthetics and they invest all the money they earn in concrete, in "high-rise" buildings, terraces and an excessive number of ornaments of an obscure style.

An inseparable part of the new architectural aesthetics is the extensive building of mosques. In fact, it meets the needs of the Albanian society for confirming all characteristics of a distinct and strong identity. The result is an ostensible reclericalisation finding expression in building places of worship and publishing and circulating religious literature. There is another tendency among the young people, namely to turn to religious foundations and organizations for getting employment as assistants or volunteers, as well as to make their educational choice from among the religious schools and universities.

Our conversation with three university students, Catholics, helped us conclude that in the young people's eyes to get familiar with such fields of interest and activities and to assess their pragmatic value is worthwhile. Getting closer to the religious institutions and organizations is something unknown before, something, which is worth trying and learning, because it might turn out practicable. Our observations fully corresponded with the metaphoric statement made by an Albanian leader, who told us several years ago that: "We are like a family in an empty house. We want to have in it everything other people have – tables and chairs and beds..."

One should not overlook the severe confrontation between modernity and the stringent Albanian tradition, where the latter's upholders are trying, with the help of religion, to maintain the *satus quo*, the unequivocal *potestas* model, and the patriarchal hierarchy.

Oppressively ostentatious are the numerous monuments to the liberation war heroes. As a rule, those are two or three metre high obelisks or blocks of black marble on top of which there stands a full-length representation of the hero, "Kalashnikov" in hand, equipped with a whole lot of cartridge-belts and other military attributes. There are also the corresponding heroic inscriptions, sometimes a listing of his merits, sometimes pledges for carrying on the hero's deed, as well as plenty of artificial flowers, even artificial brushes and small trees. This is obviously necessary as part of the creation and establishment of the new myths and the aesthetics of heroisation.

Emanations of the Kosovar fashion style are works devoted to "Liberator" America. The Kosovar Albanians have been infatuated by the United States, while President Clinton has risen to the rank of a national hero. One of the main streets in Priština is named Bill Clinton; the name of Bill Clinton has also been given to a stone-cutter's and a service-station. Near to the same main street there is a Hillary café. On entering the city, the traveller is struck by a huge replica of the Statue of Liberty, overtopping absurdly the roof of the newly built Victoria Hotel.

The local people and all our Albanian respondents are convinced that the Americans are the most steadfast defenders of the Albanian cause and would therefore back their claims for independent Kosovo. They would like the American forces to stay in Kosovo as long as possible, for this makes them feel secure. They were 100 per cent supportive of the war in Iraq, although they were somewhat envious about

the fact that attention has been diverted from the Albanian national question and Kosovo's independence over to the Middle East and the oil fields.

During our field work there were commentaries in TV programmes and daily newspapers in Macedonia and Kosovo, as well as in Serbia and Bulgaria, on a prognosis made by professor Francisco Veiga of the University of Barcelona, that the U.S. has decided to find a new loyal ally on the Balkans and will therefore support the establishment of Greater Albania. The agitated Balkan press published some maps. Our team bought for 5 euros a map of Ethnic Albania, which was on sale everywhere in the streets of Priština. This map had spread the ethnic Albanian territories as far as Niš, including the whole of Southern Serbia, Western Macedonia, with the border lying much farther east of Skopje and Kumanovo and touching upon Veles. Of course, it embraced Kosovo, Albania, but also Northern Greece and Çameria (Thesprotia). A great portion of Montenegro, together with the Adriatic coast and the capital Podgorica, were also within the ethnic Albanian borders. As it seemed, poor Montenegrins were actually left with only Cetine and its adjacent villages. This paragraph is not a diversion from the subject of the corresponding section in the present text, but rather part of Kosovo's geopolitical aesthetics.

Public sentiments, myths and anticipations in the two major communities

Albanians – the end of euphoria. During the past four post-war years something happened in the Albanian community, maybe the most tangible change occurred – a conflict of generations, or to put it less harshly, a growing generation gap. To us as analysts this fact is amazing, because we know quite well the stringent patriarchal character and tradition of the Albanians. The causes of the tearing up of the very fabric of the Albanian cultural model in such a short span of time is a challenge to the social anthropologist. Having collected dozens of interviews with men of all age groups whom we could describe in terms of family relations as four generations: fathers – sons – grandsons – great-grandsons, we can already make some assumptions.

It is the attitude to the present and the assessment of the past that are at the root of the thinning intergeneration ties. The generation between 45 and 80 years is affected by certain Yugo-nostalgia, which in the case of the older people has been reduced to extreme mythologisation of Marshal Tito. The middle-aged generation, too, cherishes nice memories of the Yugoslavian past and the autonomy. Both groups have extremely critical attitudes to the current state of affairs in society, politics and the economy in Kosovo. The young generation, on their part, remember only the humiliation of the late 1980s and the 1990s, the underground schools, the apartheid under Milosevic, the radical philosophies and the accumulating hatred. They were involved, directly or indirectly, in the war. They are happy with the present condition of Kosovo and anticipate the future with optimism.

On an early morning outside the post office in Prizren, we conversed at great lengths with the elderly people, from the town itself and from nearby villages, queuing up to get their pensions. Each of our interlocutors confirmed he was the head of a large family.

A respondent from the village of Opoja: "My family consists of 15 members – I have three sons and a daughter. All of them live with me, along with their daughters-in-law and the children. My sons are jobless, but they don't want to leave for Europe illegally. They wait for some opportunity to seek a legal job outside Kosovo." The interviewed old man had worked for three years and a half in Germany and had from there a pension of 45 euros. Before the war, he had received a pension of 800 dinars.

This information was accompanied by a remark confirmed by the other old people assembled in front of the post office: “Yugoslavia is no more and the pension is gone too. I don’t care about politics now that I can’t live on my pension. How can I live on 45 euros, with so many people in my family who depend on me?”

Nevertheless, we persisted in urging him to make some political comments and he agreed reluctantly: “I’ve gone through three wars and I know for sure it was best under Marshal Tito. A great man and a big politician! Things might change for the better now too, but when would that be, we won’t be living to see it. Only under Tito people lived properly and with dignity, it’s been all shit from that time on!”

Our respondent got excited and angry, therefore we changed the subject: “Do your sons know the Kanun? And their sons?” Answer: “They not only know the Kanun, but they also stick to it – both my children and grandchildren. I’m the head of the family and everybody should listen to me! Fourteen people in this family can’t make a single step without asking me.” Question: “Do you think this tradition will persist after your death?” The interviewee hesitated: “Who knows if they would obey the Kanun after my death. My eldest son will take my place and I believe he would continue running the family according to the old rules.” We revert to the political topic: “You now have your own parliament in Priština, don’t you expect things to improve, to have jobs and more chances for a better living?” His answer full of anger: “Kosovo’s head is KFOR, parliament can do nothing, and who knows if they want to, the young ones there, for they’ve lost respect for anything.”

One of our respondents drowned us in curses and unusual aggression: “The state’s already gone. Here and now it’s *nemechka* (German ground). It’s all because of the Serbs. Serbia should be run over by tanks, she won’t listen to anything else. I’d roll tanks over Slavism anywhere. The way UČK did. (Cursing...)!” A member of the research team: “We are Bulgarians, there are many other Slavs beside the Serbs, we are different, do you hate all of us? Answer: “There’s no difference, Slavism is a disease, all Slavs should be done away with...!”

Worried that we had to listen to such a tirade and wild cursing, another respondent from the village of Leskovac broke in: “Don’t pay attention to him, don’t take offence. He belongs to a most disgusting breed the war brought to light. He is a murderer. He killed his wife and a man, her friend. He was in prison for fifteen years and would’ve lain for life, but he was let out during the war together with lots of other convicts. He is now playing the hero – a political convict, a sufferer, he yells all the time, makes threats, he’s a greater extremist than any of the most extremist politicians.” Our tolerant respondent, too, needed informing us: “I have a pension of 35 euros, I barely make both ends meet. What I’m most angry with is that all around is chaos, everything is in mess, the Americans rule us, and we live in fear. Now in Kosovo it’s impossible to speak out and criticise, to say the truth of how we’re living. The moment they hear you, some extremists like this one appear and begin threatening that if you talk too much and don’t keep your mouth shut, they’d thrash you or send you in jail.”

Unfortunately, there is a strange unanimity among all generations in their racist attitudes to and opinions of Slavism. In the café at the Priština University we had a similar conversation, much calmer and sophisticated, indeed, with a student in literature: “I wouldn’t like to insult you, but I don’t like Slavs. I totally dislike them. All Slavs are the same. And Bosniaks are a disaster.” We felt we were on the track of the fascist-type racial theory spread throughout Kosovo, therefore, we went on with the interview: “Have you any prejudices as regards other nations?” Answer: “Of the European nations, I don’t like the Greeks, the French and the Italians.” We sought

support from another interviewee, student in French philology: “We suppose you, studying the French culture, disagree with the views of your friend?”

Answer: “I don’t like the French either, and the Italians as well...” All three interviewees summed up that if they had to choose, they would prefer the English... They thought there was no point at all in discussing Romany people: “The Roma are always with those in power, they’re rubbish”, but they did not think ill of Gorans, although “they are Slav Muslims and very close to the Serbs...”

In fact, we witnessed the typical symptoms of national arrogance and self-sufficiency. For it became clear from the students’ answers to our next questions that they liked most and solely all things Albanian. One of the students, who came from Djakovica, set out his point: “You shouldn’t ask us questions about the Kanun in critical light. Those are rules and laws which should be introduced everywhere in Europe. It’s a good Albanian experience, an age-old one, which should be adopted by the constitutional and legal systems in the European countries.” A scholar from the team: “And what about blood feud, what about the fact that it is your parents who are entitled to say which woman you should marry? You approve of it all and want to spread it throughout Europe, is that so?” Answer: “Let’s talk like realists. At the university, I have studied the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini thoroughly and I believe sixty per cent of the rules postulated in it could be applied anywhere, and if so it happens, the world would become a better place. Certainly, forty per cent may be discarded or critically revised before being applied.” Question: “At which departments is the Kanun studied?” Answer: “Each student in the humanities can study the Kanun as an optional discipline, for example at the Literature Department, also at the Faculty of Law.” Although they spoke as admirers of traditional law, we asked additional questions in order to establish how far the revolt of the young generation against traditions went: “Would you allow your parents to designate the woman you should marry, and how many children would you like to have, or would you listen to you parents’ advice?” The answers all students gave were of the same type: “I won’t let them arrange my marriage. I’d ask their opinion, of course, but I’ll choose for myself. The children will be two, three at the most, no matter what our parents say.”

It is absolutely clear that obsession with the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini is part of the process of affirmation of the Albanian identity, part of the cult of Albanianism, and the core of Albanian nationalism. It is not at all a desire to strictly observe the prescriptions and norms the way they were observed by grandparents and parents, on the contrary, it is a matter of modernization and revolt against the rules, there is no denying.

We continued our interviews with the students taking up the topic of the future status of Kosovo. We asked: “Would you like to live in some other place, do you consider emigrating?” Unanimous answers by several of the young people: “To me Kosovo is the best place in the world. Studying somewhere else – yes, but we are going to work in Kosovo.” The students told us that their university allowances had been covered by relatives who lived in Europe. The yearly academic fee is 130 euros, and the cost of accommodation is about 50 euros per individual. They had brothers and sisters working abroad and, in this connection, they made the following commentaries: “Our relatives working in Europe invest in us.” A literature student having two brothers in Germany: “They have an agreement, and one of my brothers sends me 200 euros each month. Even if there’s only one person working abroad, it’s enough – he would help.”

A question from the team members: “Are there any fears in your life? What are you afraid of most?” Answer: “There’s disappointment with Thaqi and Haradinaj,

many people say they back and support them out of fear. If a politician speaks against another politician, he may be killed, but in politics it's like that in the other parts of the world too." Another young man breaks in making a topical remark: "We're afraid of the war in Iraq most, because it's possible for the American contingent to draw out of here. Then the Serbs will be back." "We worry about many things – about unemployment, about being forced to live together with the Serbs, sometimes we fear that Kosovo might be divided, that some part of Kosovo might be given to Serbia."

One of the youths summed up judiciously: "The truth is that both we and the Serbs in Kosovo still live with our illusions. We, Albanians, are waiting for independence, while the Serbs want Kosovo to be Serbian or something like that." Question: "Imagine you fall in love with a Serb girl, what would happen then, would you marry her?" Answer: "Should I fall in love, I would make love to her, but marry her – no, never!"

We also talked at great length about Macedonia, about the Albanians, wherever in the Balkans they live, and about Greater Albania, of course. An argument started among the students on the subject of whether they would fight for Greater Albania. The result was two to one in favour of those who were not willing to go to war. "If I'm supposed to defend the independence of Kosovo, I would fight in battle and I would give my life. But if someone decides to raise an army in the name of Greater Albania – I wouldn't enlist as a volunteer, I wouldn't sacrifice myself for such a cause." And the opposite opinion expressed with pathos by a young man from Djakovica: "The Motherland is beautiful even if you are killed for her sake, I would go fighting and give my life for the ethnic Albanian boundaries. Albania's borders should be those of the time of World War II – then the Albanian territory was 60 000 square kilometres; should America help us, in less than an year and a half Kosovo's status and the frontiers will be settled."

The men of the 40-50 age group whom we interviewed in Prizren, Kačanik and other places, presumed that Kosovo would be cantoned: "Write it down – we are going to have an independent and cantoned Kosovo." They also believed that nothing depended on the parliament in Priština, that it was the U.S. and the international community that made the decisions.

The young people we conversed with in Kačanik added to the theme of independent Kosovo the following statement: "This thing, about the independence status, is inevitable, because we have already settled the problem – in ten years Kosovo is to become the biggest state in the Balkans – with a population of 10 million. Love with someone of another ethnic origin is not quite acceptable, it might be possible for a man, but for a girl to have an affair with a member of another ethnus – no." They burst in a friendly laughter: "It may be acceptable, though, for us to marry Bulgarian, or Turkish, women."

The village of Kačanik is a very big one – 8-10 thousand residents. A countless number of children crowd the local school during the breaks. The Christians' church is guarded by KFOR as are all other Christian sites in the territory of Kosovo. Our interviewees kept family memories of how a hundred years ago there were Bulgarians in Kačanik and, in this connection, they made an ironic remark concerning Macedonia: "There is no such state. Those living in Macedonia are Bulgarians, Albanians, Turks, Serbs, and Gypsies. No other people."

The Serb enclaves, the frustration and radicalization of the Serb community. At the border checkpoint on entering Kosovo we met a UNMIK police officer who asked us different questions and, having realised that we were scholars,

made some comments on the situation in Kosovo. With the cynicism typical of a long serving and, therefore, tired soldier, he told us: "If you want to know how the Serbs feel, just visit the village of Štrpce –they hang about in the pub from the morning – drinking, cursing, crying, singing..." That made an impression on us and, before heading for Štrpce, we asked: "And what would you say about the Albanians, what do they do?" Answer: "The Albanians? The Albanians make babies and that's it... Well, of course they do business too. They are pragmatic."

Štrpce is a large village – as many as 13 000 residents, the school is crowded, it is named "Jovan Zvijic". The small gardens in front of the houses are cultivated, a mountain river flows through the village. In a central place on the façade of the municipal building there is a sign plate reading: "The Republic of Serbia/Autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohia/Skupština Štrpce". Next to the municipal building there is a monument commemorating the victims of the Balkan war and World War I – inscribed in it are the names of all soldiers and officers who had lost their lives. OSCE's offices are accommodated in the same building. One or two KFOR armoured vehicles could be seen along the main street, but things had obviously been left to OSCE, because there were more of their automobiles.

It goes without saying that we stopped at the tavern first; it is also situated right in the central part of the village, just next to the school and the municipal building. Not long before, we were already talking with two pensioners, who hurried to express their worries: "We are living as if we are under occupation. It's not democracy, it's cultural occupation. Only under Tito we had true democracy." One of the pensioners, who had worked for nearly ten years in Germany, received a pension of 1000 euro and therefore generously treated his friends in the pub to a drink of cognac: "I have a good pension, but even if I got one million euro, what would I need it for, what would I do with it, when we live like prisoners here – we can't go anywhere. I can't travel even to Skopje and Belgrade. I can't start a business!"

The Štrpce municipality is part of Sirinička župa, near the border with the Republic of Macedonia, and includes 12 villages inhabited by Serbs. During the war, a numerous Serb military unit was deployed in the vicinity, and immediately after the withdrawal of the Serb army, the area was put under KFOR control, which protected the population from the UČK attacks. At present this Serb-populated enclave lives absolutely isolated from the neighbouring municipalities of Kačanik and Prizren, densely populated by Albanians. The local population maintains contacts with Serbia, there are passenger bus lines, Serbian newspapers are delivered daily and the elderly people get their pensions in dinars from Serbia. The basic monetary unit in the municipality is the dinar. Within the boundaries of the municipality people feel safe, but they are afraid to work on their fields. About 4 or 5 kilometres away from Štrpce, there is a well-known mountain resort – the local hotels accommodate Serbs that have chosen to return, but their homes are in ethnic Albanian localities and already inhabited by Albanians. The native residents feel depressed and cheer themselves up by hopes that the Serb state would be restored in the province: There will never be an Albanian Kosovo. Our great-grandparents lived here. This is Older Serbia, not Belgrade! What do we want? To live in a Serbian state, to move and work freely and not feel as if we are under occupation.

The only Serb enclave immediately bordering on Serbia is situated in the Northern part of Kosovo – Northern Kosovska Mitrovica, Zvečan, Trepča and Leposavić. Half of the Serb population that has remained in the province is concentrated here. The status of the divided town is a special one – for example, goods imported from Serbia are registered and relevant custom-duties are collected

not at Kosovo's administrative border, but only after they pass through the divided Mitrovica. The local Serbs take part in Kosovo's political life, but they are also activists in Serbia. The northernmost municipalities are de facto ethnically and economically separated from Kosovo. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the Serbs in Northern Kosovo are most radically minded and convinced that whatever resolution is passed on Kosovo's status, they will be able to uphold to the last their self-government which resembles autonomy and which, in their views, should lead to an independent Northern Kosovo.

In February, the Union of the Serb Municipalities and Communities in KOSMET (the name used by the Serbs to designate Kosovo) was founded. We interviewed the leader of the Serbian National Council in Northern Mitrovica and he told us that the newly formed and newly elected Kosovo institutions are positively defined as Albanian. The Serbs are not interested in participating in them, therefore they trust in self-government. To them, any resolution that does not guarantee full self-government of the Serb communities is unacceptable and would mean continuation of the process of emigration of the Serbs from the province. When in February the Union of Municipalities was founded, i.e. an institution which in practice offered an alternative for the reorganization of Kosovo into two separate entities, M. Steiner commented that it was an attempt to establish a new parallel structure based on monoethnicity and directly contradicting the international multiethnic conception of Kosovo. Our respondent, a Serb leader, declared: "There isn't any willingness on the part of the Albanians themselves for living jointly. According to the Albanian conception, multiethnicity means an ethnically cleansed society, and 90 per cent of the areas you have traveled and visited demonstrate this." He also explained that their suggestions for united Serb municipalities aimed solely at the self-protection of the Serbs and were the only chance for bringing some of the refugees back to the province.

A respondent, a chairwoman of the Association of Women in Northern Mitrovica, brought us to the top of a tall hill in the highest part of the urban area, pointed down to an entire quarter of demolished houses and said: "This is what multiethnic Kosovo means according to the Albanians. When the KFOR troops drew out, the Albanians pulled down dozens of homes of Romany people and Serbs in order to drive them away for good." The Serbs from Northern Mitrovica live isolated from the other enclaves and travel to the other Serb-populated towns and villages on buses bearing special signs called "blue corridors". Our interviewee declared: "I want reconciliation, but should an independent Kosovo be proclaimed, I'll leave!"

Lying nearby Priština is the village of Gračanica, which is divided in two – an Albanian and a Serb part, where about 2-3 thousand Serbs live much like in an enclave. Situated in this Serb enclave is the Gračanica Monastery built in the 15th century under King Milutin and his wife Simonida, daughter of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaeologus. A remarkable fact is that Gračanica is a favourite place where the UNMIK police officers operating in Priština rent homes. We did not wonder the Bulgarians preferred the Serb enclave, but we were surprised that the place was a kind of oasis for the American police officers. The latter offered an explanation: "There's no sense to pay 800 euro for a nasty flat in the dirty Priština. It's clean, quiet and tidy here and you can rent a house with a garden for 500-600 euro."

We inquired other Serb activists too about what we saw as an apparent intention and a political perspective before them. We asked quite directly: "Aren't there parallel Serb structures being set up in Kosovo and won't this impair the process

of normalization of interethnic relations?” An angry radical retorted: “Let them take a dose of their own medicine. Haven’t they won through parallel structures, through paramilitary formations? It’s our turn now – we are going to make a parallel state, we’ll rely on Serbia the way they received assistance from Albania, we’ll also form our own Kosovo Serbs Liberation Army if that be the trick...”

The same question on our part caused irritation in our female respondent, a Serb politician, but she answered with restraint: “Yes, such private units, supported by Serbia, in the sphere of health care and education do exist. But everybody should know these are life-saving institutions. Not a single Serb works or is a patient at the hospital in Priština, only Albanian is spoken at the post office, on the television too. The Serbs don’t go to the theatre, because the plays are performed in Albanian, it’s the same in the cinemas, nor do they dare use the city transport. Naturally, this made it necessary to open three small hospital wards for medical care in Gračanica, the Serb children already go to private schools where they are taught in Serbian, and some of them have lessons at private homes.

Lying in the outskirts of Priština is the village of Kosovo polje, in which a very small number of Serbs have remained. They work at the Health Centre, which is under the control of the Russian international contingent. Our respondent is from the village of Lipljan, but he runs a tavern in Kosovo polje. It is not quite clear what keeps the business above water, because hardly any other customers were seen in the pub but Bulgarian officers or Russian soldiers occasionally dropping in. The Serbs that go there are as few as to gather at a single table. The interviewee related how, in order to supply his restaurant, he would go shopping to the Shkriptari shops under KFOR escort: “We’re done and over here. I’d sell my house in Lipljan, should anyone pay adequately. Should the Russian step out, we’re leaving too. Only 300 Serbs live in Priština – all of them old men and women. For now, the score is 1:1, we need another war...”

It was only in the city of Prizren that the atmosphere of multiethnicity could be slightly felt, since ethnic Albanians and ethnic Turks when living side by side get along relatively well. The population in the city itself and the nearby villages runs up to nearly 200 000 people of whom 20 000 are ethnic Turks. We were struck by the fact that many of the Albanians speak the two languages – they have a good knowledge of Turkish. The instances of intermarriages are not rare. However, there are as little as 63 Serbs, while their pre-war number was 12 000. All churches in Prizren are enclosed, there are strict premonitory signs forbidding getting close to them, and they are secured by KFOR guards and armoured vehicles. On top of one of the hills is the “Saints Cyril and Methodius” theological school, where 10 to 12 Serb refugees have been hiding. Most dramatic and emblematic is the case of a married couple – an Albanian husband and his Serb wife: “We live against our will. We can’t find a shelter anywhere. It’s good we have no children.” Terror-stricken, they are waiting for Australian emigration visas – they want to escape as far away as possible, preferably to another continent.

The refugees live on 35 euro a month: “We are like prisoners”; along the way to their asylum one could see graffiti reading: “We’ll kill you, nits!”

In the St. George church built back in 1856, we met the priest who had tried to collect from all places possible icons that had survived - in order to save them. He told us: “I can’t abandon them, no matter they’re only about 60 people. It’s been four years now and I’m still waiting for some of them to come back, but there’s nobody. I travel occasionally to Belgrade, where my family lives. And it’s the fourth year in a row that I ride home on a tank...”

*The fate and views of several women living in their mirror world or the
distorting glasses of Kosovo's political perspective*

Two emancipated Albanian women from the diaspora. The two Albanian women, about 45 years old, whom we met in Prizren, are nurses by training. When they were students, they took part in the 1981 demonstrations and were compelled to emigrate for political reasons. They had worked in Frankfurt on the Main, Germany, in the course of 20 years. The people of their generation emigrated most often to Germany, Switzerland, and the Arab countries, to Libya, for example.

They had returned to emancipated Kosovo in order to help – but it appeared to them that at this point there were many uncertain things which might frustrate the chances of independent Kosovo: “Most of the leaders from the diaspora should come home and work in the concrete political situation. Although the Albanians abroad, anywhere around the world, work for the cause too.”

We, as a research team, have known for several years now that the Albanian diaspora in Western Europe and in the United States has been one of the most important factors influencing the developments in Kosovo, as well as in Macedonia. First of all, the diaspora possesses significant financial resources, attachment to the family structures, and commitment to the national cause. It was in the midst of the diaspora that the core group of ideologists of the future of the Albanian national idea and the strategies for its realization was formed. In consequence of the fact that the members of the Albanian immigration have lived for a long time away from their native places, they are much less susceptible to regional disagreements and rivalries stemming from the level of cultural differences, identity characteristics, and family interests. Albanians' intra-community relations are charged with similar conflicts, no matter where in the Balkans they have been dispersed. From the perspective of time and from a long distance, the Albanian diaspora can more clearly see the future prospects of the Albanian national and political unity.

During the last several years the Albanian leaders living in Western Europe have increasingly taken the role of a driving force for the organization and funding of the military campaigns of the Albanians in Macedonia, Southern Serbia, and Kosovo itself. In the opinion of both commanders and combatants who have participated in armed clashes in the three regions, the important decisions concerning the military and political planning are produced by the Albanian national strategic center (traditionally called the *Elders' Council*) whose headquarters have been kept secret, but are probably based in Germany or Switzerland. The Albanians who have taken part in fighting in different parts of the Balkans, say they would not have been as effective were it not for the considerable logistic assistance, money, weapons, medicines and military experts coming from abroad.

The drawing up of plans has also been ascribed to this Albanian strategic center based abroad.

In a sense, our respondents from Prizren once again confirmed everything we had heard until that moment, except for certain nuances and some hitherto missing details. In Germany, the two women are members of the *Albanian National Democratic League* (*BKDSH – Besëlidhja Kombëtare Demokratike Shiptare*), which was registered in Germany; it represents an association of all Albanians, not only the Kosovars. The league was founded in 1928 as the successor of the political ideas of the Prizren League of 1878. In the late 1930s it discontinued its activities and resumed them after the end of World War II, in Germany. It has representative offices in

Albania and Kosovo. At present, its formal leader in Germany is Emin Fazlia, known by the name of Emil Kastrioti. The League has taken care of the Albanian immigrants in Western Europe – accommodation, employment, etc. As for its influence in the province, the [two] respondents asserted that “the statutes of all Albanian parties in Kosovo have been borrowed from the League’s statutes, and what is more, all parties and many of the leaders have been trained by it”.

Naturally, we asked them questions about their political views and intentions. In a nutshell, they profess several ideas: “KFOR is unable to do for Kosovo what the Albanians themselves, our party followers, can. The major problem is that the Serbs destroyed the intelligentsia in Kosovo. Some of them emigrated and are still abroad, others have become Belgrade’s collaborationists. The Serbs had made life intolerable for almost all ethnic Albanians – we could not have meals together with the Serbs, nor work with them, we were separated in all spheres of everyday life. The situation today is better and we want to live and work here.” Question: “And what do you think of the status of Kosovo?” Answer: It’s too early to discuss Kosovo’s status, because the wound is still running and it’s impossible to consider multiethnic co-existence yet. One thing is definitely clear – we won’t ever allow anybody to rule us, we won’t ever be ordered about by anybody!” In connection with our observations, we were certainly interested in the views held by our interviewees concerning the possible unification of the ethnic Albanians: “There is a patch of land in Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, all this is Albanian land. The Albanians, too, should get their own.” One of the respondents stamped her foot on the ground and insisted: “Everybody who was born in this land has a right over it. The Albanians in Macedonia should also get their own. They even may not speak their own language there and they have both economic and political problems. I don’t mean aggressive acts, but given that there are problems, they should be resolved calmly and each one should get his own...” Question: “Is there a possibility for the unification of Kosovo and Western Macedonia at a certain point?” Answer: “And why not. We don’t have problems between us. We don’t want to take another nation’s land, we just want our people and our land, we want our own territory, where Albanians are present, and to live in peace with all other Albanians.” Question: “Yet, you obviously want unification of all Albanians, i.e. Greater Albania?” Answer: “The Serb propaganda has contrived the Greater Albania thesis. We would like to live together – all Albanians in one place. It would be then that the Albanians of the diaspora, who are now living at their homes here and abroad, would return and would help for the implementation of a correct policy.”

When we talked about the Albanian traditions, we heard from them something that surprised us, because it fully coincided with the views held by our respondents-students from the Pristina University: “You shouldn’t perceive the Kanun only as something negative – those are wise rules that have made people’s lives easier and have maintained order. The Kanun is great and it is currently being studied in the United States. It should be practiced, some of its chapters and paragraphs, while the negative substance should be abandoned. No matter what, be sure that God is kind to the Albanians. We have been visiting various places around the world for decades and praying in all churches for freedom, independence and unification. And God has heard us, because each temple is a place of worship for the Albanian – be it a church or a mosque.”

A Serb woman from Priština and an Albanian woman from Southern Mitrovica looking at their destinies in the distorting mirror of “new, independent

Kosovo”. Both of them are beautiful and strong-minded women around 45 years of age. Their laughter is much the same – loud and infectious. They themselves are very much alike – both physically and mentally, although they are separated by a distance of many kilometers, by plenty of armoured KFOR equipment and numerous KFOR guards. They are also separated by what one of them described as follows: “Here, in Kosovo, your place is determined the moment you come into the world - a Serb belongs to the Serbs, an Albanian – to the Albanians.” Both of them do not want to accept this rule and are so similar in the way they think, that it is just impossible not to make a parallel and present them side by side.

The Serb woman R.’s account: “I spent all my life in Priština. I was with my parents first, then I got married, later I gave birth to my three children and brought them up, all in this city. I read lectures at the University, I worked as ward chief at the hospital. Today I can’t go freely to my house any more, I live in the X. enclave, at some other people’s place.³ In Priština, and in Kosovo as a whole, the international community has been in place for four years now and what does it matter for me and for my family, when I don’t even know the people who are living in my house. I don’t want anything exceptional but just be answered why I can’t go to my place where I have reared my children. Not because I’m better or worse than the Albanian women, not because I’m more intelligent or more stupid than they are, not because I work harder or lie idler, but simply because I’m a Serb woman. I’m sorry to say that after these four years the answer is but ethnic discrimination. Thank God, my children are already grown-up and independent. They study in Europe, you certainly don’t think that, as a mother, I could tell them: “come back here!”

We inquired about the new army of which we had heard to be operating within Kosovo and Macedonia – ANA, as well as about what we had heard from the ethnic Albanians on the subject of Greater Albania. Our interlocutor examined the Ethnic Albanians Map, which we unfolded in front of her, and laughed: “Just look how far they have spread out! But you put the question about Greater Albania in an unwise way. It’s just normal for anybody [of them] to declare this to be Serbian propaganda. In fact, the aspiration for a new status, for a State of Independent Kosovo, is only a mask put on to cheat the international community, to conceal the Greater Albania project. The Albanians are a nation that has never been and is not willing to live with anyone else. Take a look around the Balkans, the ethnically purest areas are to be found where Albanians live. It’s the same even with resort places – the ski resort near Štrpce used to be visited by Serbs, and by Macedonians, but it is now crowded with Albanians alone; isn’t the situation in some areas of Montenegro’s Adriatic coast the same? Anything that has been taken under control by Albanians mustn’t be frequented by “others” any more.

They make changes in everything – from changing the signs to destroying anything indicative of “stranger’s” presence – architecture, gravestones, and places of worship.

It’s no use asking again and again about the differences between KLA, ANA, AOPBM, – those are different names of the same thing. It’s not even certain that these armies spring up as a result of various group interests. This is rather a way of confusing the observers and sweeping up the traces. The same is valid of the parties. In order to divert the attention from the ADK and their radical positions, suddenly a

³ According to data of the international administration in Kosovo Albanians have settled in 77,000 somebody else’s houses, flats or other possession and more than 37,000 premises have been destroyed by fire.

new nationalist Albanian party is proclaimed – Bali Kombetar, which is active in the same territories – in Kosovo, in Albania, and in Macedonia, and which voices the same platform – unification of all Albanian territories. What’s the new then?

I have a theory, maybe because I’m a doctor. Natality is the most primitive way of conquering territories. The real problem wherever Albanians live is the total enslavement of their wives and turning them into breeding machines. I have interviewed Albanian women – all of them say that after the birth of their first child the family demands of them to give birth, without delay, to more and more children. Nobody asks them if they want it, or not. It’s an absolute violation of human rights, trampling of their human dignity all taking place within the confines of their walled and shut up houses. There’s help from nowhere. As a matter of fact I feel sorry for them, they need support in order to get emancipated. This is the real problem, and it is a civilization problem.⁴

The Albanians’ birthrate was taboo, a topic that was never commented on in Serbia and Yugoslavia. The problems were examined from all possible angles, but there never was a single word spoken about the emancipation, about the liberation of the Albanian women. It seems to me the international community now finds it disgraceful and impolite to discuss this issue, it is considered a racial prejudice. And what if a poor community has 5-6-10 children. No wonder, they can’t provide education for them, nor easily ensure a normal standard of living, and this brings about criminal behaviour. I remember my childhood years ago – we were two kids and our parents provided us with everything we needed. It’s quite normal to provoke envy when riding on a bicycle, while the neighbour’s ten kids, my peers and schoolmates, wonder how to still their hunger on bread alone. So a time comes when my neighbours turn up at my place, enraged and armed, to kill me, to rob me, to take all nice things I’ve got, which they haven’t.

In a way, this overwhelming birthrate threatens the Albanians themselves, because there is huge unemployment, they transmit criminality to Europe – to France, Germany, and Sweden. Aren’t the Western societies aware of how endangered they are by the Albanian gangster rings and criminal activities. They are aware, of course, because they have their intelligence services, they have observers, and analysts like you. The truth is that Europe wants to create an independent Albanian state, they will concentrate the Albanians in one place, as in a ghetto, by promises that all will be integrated into the EU and Europe will be cleansed. The bad thing is that these plans are being made to the detriment of the Serbs and our Serb lands and homes, because they deprived us to produce this “black zone” in the Balkans with a nice sanitary cordon around.”

The Albanian woman, F., whom we interviewed in Southern Mitrovica: “My parents come from Dolno Studime, they’re workers, a decent family, we’ve never been committed to politics. My father had some chances, he had helped Tito’s guerrillas, and he was offered different posts, but he didn’t accept. He also used to tell my brother that “politics is great trouble and one can always tarnish one’s good name”. That’s why I’m trying now to expand my business, I’m offered various European projects, but they’re all tied one way or another to politics and I wouldn’t like to get committed. I take a human to be a human, I don’t care about what one’s religion or nationality is. I also want to have knowledge of all languages, in order to be able to comprehend and communicate with people directly, without an interpreter. This is how I talk with my customers – with each woman in her own language.

⁴ The highest birthrate in Europe is registered in the province of Kosovo - 27 per mille. According to UNMIK data, between 55,000 and 57,000 children have been born since 2000 in the province.

I spent my life in Northern Mitrovica, we had a large house and a workshop, and our five kids were brought up there. During the war, I thought to stay, I wanted to keep living along with my neighbours, but that proved to be impossible. There were bands that kept threatening us and we fled as far as Albania. Two weeks after the war was over, I went to my house and there was already a Serb family living there. They didn't let me take anything of our belongings, they gave me only my kids' pictures. They took away from me everything else and I keep wondering how is it possible to use another's belongings, especially personal ones... What I hated most was that I knew the people who had accommodated themselves in my house. I think it might've been easier for me if they were some strangers, but it was a man I had worked with over the years...

I'm not one of those who keep complaining. I moved to the southern part of Mitrovica and started my life from scratch. I live in a rented house and it was most difficult for me to set up a new home – beds, coverings, chairs and so on. I love stylish things, things beautiful and I've been accustomed to a high standard. We were quite rich. I'm poor now, but life is still interesting. I've rented this premise for a dressmaker's shop, and I pay 350 euro a month. I once used to work as a secretary of the chief of the "Smelting" division of the metallurgical works in Zvečan. Quite an important job I had. It was a large plant, I worked with Serbs, neighbours, colleagues. Dressmaking was my hobby, and now I'm living on it. Sewing has been my leisure pursuit for 30 years now. I had even specialised in making traditional wedding costumes, today they are in demand only by folk ensembles.

I started with a single sewing machine, my sister's, but then I realised that my friends and other Albanian women also needed to earn their own money in order to be independent. Later I made up a good project and a German organisation supported me. However, their requirement to me was hiring Albanian women returning from Germany. I didn't mind and so I did, but now I dream of expanding my business, because I want to give jobs to more women who are trying to emancipate themselves. This is a very important issue for Kosovo – women's emancipation. You just can't imagine what it means to be closed up, dependent and all your life bear and look after children.

I have five children, two of my sons are in France. I love them all, I wouldn't give up anyone of them, but if I could choose, I would certainly have had fewer kids. Now I have the feeling that I've lost quite many years of my life. I have my dreams, it doesn't matter that I'm older now – I want to have money, to live, to travel around the world, I want very much to be able to travel. I wouldn't like to be rich the way Albanians get rich nowadays. There's something disgusting in it – they're doing wholesale trade, they're either laying up money or building huge houses. I don't even know what they do with their money.

I've changed a great deal after all that. I wouldn't built a house now, I wouldn't be piling up furnishings, because I already know how easy it is to lose everything in an instant. We, Albanians, are both Catholics and Bektashi, and me, I'm Muslim. I'm not a devoted believer, I know what the most important things are: don't steal, don't kill, and don't lie. I saw them during the war: a devout person, but stealing and killing. No faith teaches one to hurt others. And we all did much harm to each other. I'm an optimist, however, we'll be living together again. If only the extremists don't take the upper hand – they are to be found among the Albanians too, but more radical at the moment are the Serbs. If only could they get to peace..."

Conclusion

As in the field studies published in the two volumes of the *Urgent Anthropology* series entitled *The Albanian National Problem and the Balkans*, IMIR, 2001 and *Albanian Perspectives*, IMIR, 2003 – the objective of the present field diary is, on the basis of the rich source material, to make comprehensive interdisciplinary conclusions without imposing the author's opinion.

Even so, two points stand out perfectly clear in all the interviews, inquiries and observations:

- The political and social environment now witnessed in Kosovo represents, in a certain sense, a distorted mirror reflection of the ethnic apartheid and segregation of the Milosevic's era. This will naturally lead to the gradual self-organization of the Serbs, isolated in several enclaves; it will make them radicalise their ideas and political actions, establish their own parallel administrative structures in the name of surviving and, in effect, struggle by all means against the federalization of the province.
- There is some tension among the three major political agents of the Albanian majority in Kosovo and it has led to the formation of almost equal in number and armament party militias exerting, by force and in a destructive way, their influence on political and economic life in Kosovo. After the eventual withdrawal of UNMIK and the reduction in the number of KFOR contingents, the presence of these militias as well as of the troops to be raised in the Serb enclaves, will become a factor that will undoubtedly lead to a sort of permanent guerrilla war.

Antonina Zhelyazkova